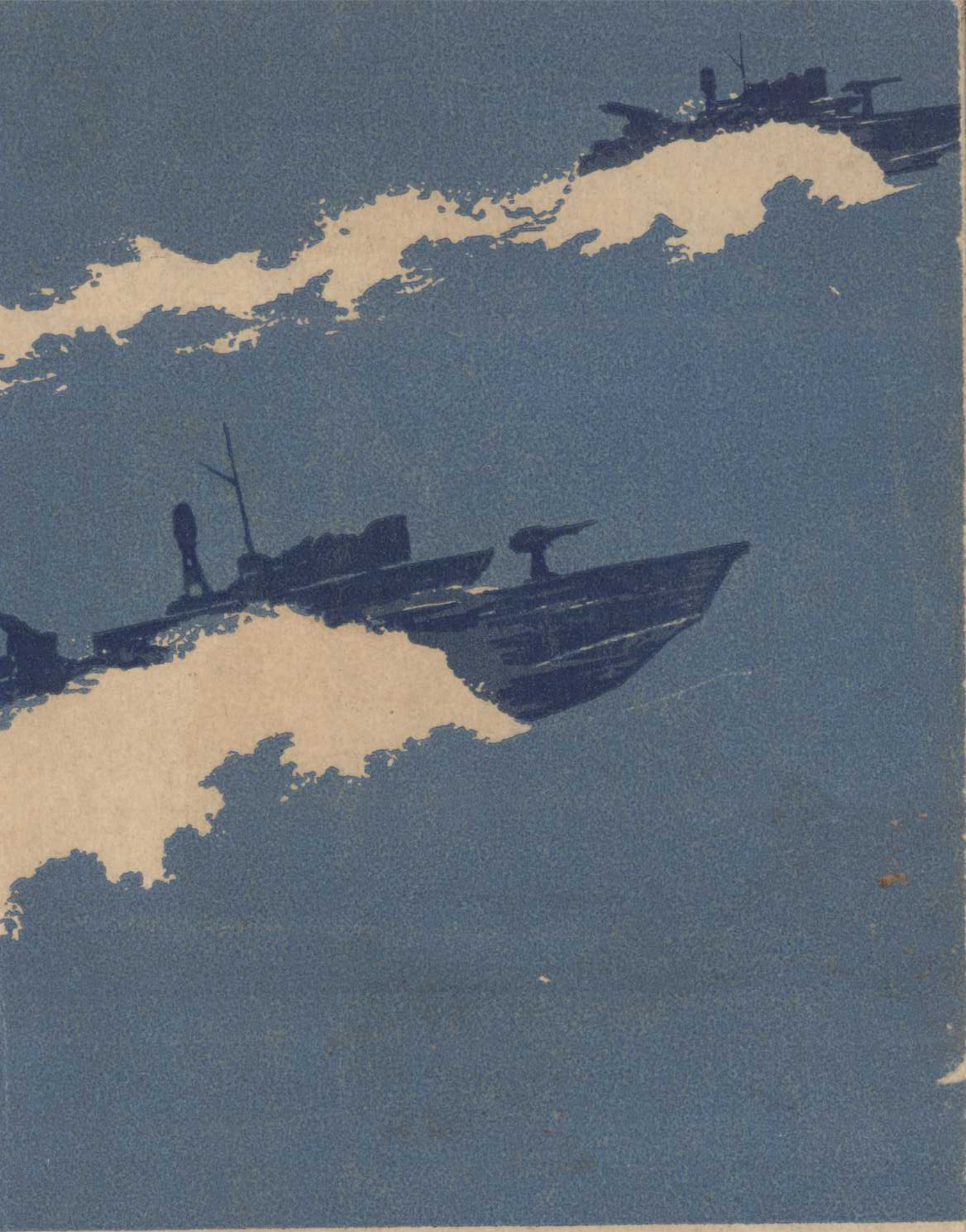

MEN OF THE SEA

LIBRARY OF SOVIET SHORT STORIES

MEN OF THE SEA

STORIES ABOUT EXPLOITS AT SEA

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PUBLISHING HOUSE
Moscow

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN

DESIGNED BY A. ALEXEYEV

CONTENTS

	Page
G. Gaidovsky, MARCH 25, 1942	5
Y. Levakovskaya, ON FLAMING SOIL	36
M. Kolesnikov, FROM THE BED OF THE SEA .	48
M. Abramov, BATTLE AT SUNRISE	57
M. Zinger, TORPEDOES FIND THEIR MARK .	72
M. Velichko, THE INVISIBLE TORPEDO-BOAT	85

G. Gaidovsky

MARCH 25, 1942

People who were in besieged Sevastopol recall March 1942 when the city revelled in the warmth of the spring sun.

Two assaults had been repulsed. Months of fire and bloodshed had been endured.

Ruined houses, piles of broken brick and deep shell-holes eloquently showed what the heroic city had lived through.

Nazi aircraft kept up their raids and the thunder of artillery fire never ceased for a moment, but the people of Sevastopol set about bringing order to the life of their city. Those who had hidden in basements and cellars began to emerge into the light. The streets were full of people again and in Primorsky Boulevard children were playing "war."

It was still cold, but the approach of spring was felt everywhere: the buds on the trees were opening and the sea had calmed down

and was no longer battering the shore. The sky was so blue and clear that that even dampened the mood of Sevastopol's defenders. Indeed, Nazi aircraft took advantage of the fine weather to raid the city more frequently.

However, that did not prevent the city from making the most of the breathing-space. With bells ringing merrily, the small trams scurried along the streets, stopping during an air-raid, and then continuing on their way past ruins and bomb-craters.

In Primorsky Boulevard gardeners were laying out flower-beds, planting flowers in the loosened soil, carefully taking them out of small hothouse pots. The pots were kept in bomb-shelters. Children and adults came to watch the gardeners, standing for hours exchanging bits of gossip and jokes. Nazi propaganda claimed that hunger had wiped out the greater part of the population and that the survivors were eating cats and dogs. Many of the people "wiped out" in this fashion were busy planting radish and potatoes, cucumbers and onions, salad and peas on plots specially allocated for the purpose. How delightful it was to dig the soil and lovingly plant the seeds brought by sea from the Caucasus and then to watch the shoots pushing up.

Everybody realized that the breathing-space would be short, that the third assault for which the Nazis had brought up tremendous forces might begin at any moment.

That thought was also uppermost in the minds of the crews of a squadron of coast-guard patrol boats lying at anchor in the bay.

... In the morning of March 25, 1942, it was warm and clear.

Seaman 1st Class Ivan Golubets had only just come ashore from a patrol boat that had returned to Sevastopol. He climbed to the top of a hillock and lay down on the sun-warmed ground.

Feathery clouds hung here and there in the transparent sky, emphasizing as it were the clear blue of the heavens. The breath of a gentle breeze was felt now and then and it caused sparkling ripples to form on the mirror-like surface of the bay as though a school of small, swift-swimming fish had darted by.

Golubets had just had his dinner and he now gave himself the pleasure of basking in the sun for a minute or two.

He had with him a fresh copy of the *Krasny Chernomorets*, the Fleet newspaper, but was in no hurry to read it. He feasted his eyes on

the familiar outlines of the bay, the quiet sea and the dark line formed by the horizon in the distance.

The patrol boats were lying near the moorages. The sailors had discarded their pea-jackets with relish and their blue jumpers with white-striped collars stood out distinctly against the background of the glimmering bay.

They were in high spirits on this fine day. It was hard to believe that only this morning they had had a dangerous and long-drawn job before them.

As was their wont, the Nazis had mined the bay from the air at night. These little ships of war were like thorns in their flesh.

Early that morning, the patrol boats had gone to the mined area and dropped depth charges which detonated the mines.

When that job had been done, some of the patrol boats had gone to replenish their stocks of depth charges and had just returned. Among them was the patrol boat on which Ivan Golubets served.

He now had a few minutes in which to relax, to glance through the newspaper. His attention was immediately arrested by a line set in bold-face type and reading: "Warm

greetings of the Red Fleet to our comrades-in-arms—men, officers, commissars and political workers of the valiant Chapayev Division." That day was the 24th anniversary of the Chapayev Infantry Division, which had been decorated with the Order of the Red Banner and the Order of Lenin. Golubets had heard and read much about the Civil War hero Vasily Chapayev; he had seen the film about Chapayev more times than he could remember. The sons and grandsons of the men whom the valorous divisional commander Vasily Chapayev had led into battle were now defending Sevastopol against the Hitlerite hordes.

A long article about the training of young Communists drew his attention. He had not yet joined the Communist Party, but he had not long to wait.

What had earned him that great honour?

He looked back at his life and could find nothing out of the ordinary, remarkable in it.

* * *

Ivan, son of a Taganrog worker Karp Golubets, was born on May 8, 1916.

Life in Taganrog, on the shore of the Sea of Azov, had accustomed him to the sea and

he became a strong swimmer when he was only a small boy. Ivan's friendship with the sea steeled him and predetermined his vocation.

One day when little Ivan came home from school after a history lesson in which the defence of Sevastopol in 1854-55 was mentioned, he said to his mother:

"I want to be like Admiral Nakhimov."

"When you grow up perhaps you will be," his mother replied.

They never suspected that though Ivan would not become a famous admiral like Nakhimov, he would be ranked among the heroes of Sevastopol.

Ivan nurtured the idea of joining the Navy when he was at school and during the years he worked as electrician in the sheet-rolling department of the Taganrog Iron and Steel Works.

At the works he joined the Komsomol.

From there he went to the Black Sea to serve his term of conscription in the Soviet Armed Forces.

Asked what branch of the Forces he would prefer, he replied:

"The Navy."

He anxiously awaited the decision of the commission and calmed down only after he learned that his request had been granted.

* * *

Many young men were called up at the same time as Golubets and of the many who became sailors Ivan alone was assigned to the coastguard.

Naturally, he knew of the valiant activity of the frontier guards, who courageously fought the enemies of the Soviet Union, guarding its frontiers against spies and saboteurs. But what were the duties of a coastguard for the seaboard was also watched vigilantly by frontier guards in caps with green bands? Ivan was not aware that an unending war against agents of all kinds of secret services was going on daily at sea as on land.

At last the day came when Ivan Golubets first stepped on board a ship.

That is an occasion no sailor forgets. Long preparations precede the event, but no matter how well prepared the future sailor is he mounts the ship's gang-ladder uncertainly, thinking what shape this new life would take, what his future shipmates would be like and how they would treat him, a novice.

Bright sunbeams chased each other on the sea. A fresh breeze tore at the ship's flag.

The ship was rolling slightly and Ivan almost tripped as he stepped off the ladder on to the deck.

Clipping his words, he reported his arrival to the officer of the watch. The latter examined his papers and said:

"Go to the skipper, Comrade Golubets."

Ivan went down the vertical companion ladder into a tiny ward-room.

The skipper, a lieutenant, was sitting at the table and writing something.

Clicking his heels, Ivan said:

"Seaman Golubets reporting for duty!"

The lieutenant put aside his papers and looked up at the sailor.

"Sit down, Comrade Golubets," he said.

The officer silently surveyed Ivan, admiring his handsome, clear-cut face, broad shoulders, powerful chest and bearing.

Then he spoke, telling Ivan that he was starting out on work that was both important and interesting. Proficiency would not come at once. He would have to work hard and learn from his senior, more experienced comrades. They, the skipper said, were Komsomols like Ivan and would always give

him a helping hand. Ivan was joining a stout hearted, picked crew....

Ivan soon became a qualified helmsman and on his sleeve he proudly wore the badge of his trade—a red wheel on a red life-belt.

* * *

One evening when the wind was rising and adorning the waves with crests of foam, the skipper received orders to put out to sea for patrol duty.

The skipper glanced at the barometer, which was falling steadily, and ordered the men to their action stations.

In a few minutes the patrol boat was heading for the open sea, its bow plunging deep into the swelling waves.

Ivan was at the helm, casting glances at the compass card. It looked as though this time the wind and waves were determined to prevent the patrol boat from carrying out its assignment. The vessel was tossed from wave to wave and the sailors had to cling to the storm-lines to keep from falling.

Steering the patrol boat on a night like this was a terrible strain and a kind of sixth sense was all that helped Ivan to counter the drag of the waves.

When they arrived in the area assigned to them, the sea was boiling as though it were broth in a huge pot. Still, this was not a storm. Sailors call this kind of weather "fresh." Big vessels are hardly affected by it but not so a patrol boat. The angry sea rolled across its deck and in escaping the waves racing after it the boat kept climbing the wave before it and sliding down its steep side. Before each wave that rose over the stern was ready to strike, the fearless little vessel was already on the next crest and out of danger's reach.

The clock counted off the hours.

In the east, the sky was beginning to grow bright.

Dawn was approaching.

The boat patrolled its square in different directions. The signalmen kept their eyes peeled. The sound-detector operator had his earphones glued to his ears. All was quiet.

Towards morning the wind subsided.

Finding that the barometer needle had swung to the right, the skipper smiled for the first time that night. He ordered Ivan to turn in, and another helmsman took over at the wheel.

Ivan remained on deck, only now feeling

how numb his arms had become and how his muscles ached.

The surface of the sea was tinged with pink—day was breaking.

Ivan felt that now he could really relax.

Just then the signalman cried out that there was a man on a piece of wreckage. He was not showing any signs of life and disappearing from view every other moment.

What had happened during the stormy night? Who was the unfortunate fellow? Was he alive or had help come too late?

The patrol boat turned swiftly. Manoeuvring, the skipper brought it alongside the piece of wood. Strong arms lifted the stranger and carefully put him down on the deck.

"Dead or alive?"

Ivan went down on his knees and put his ear to the man's chest. His heart was beating evenly and distinctly.

"Alive. Evidently he's swallowed quite a bit of water."

Before anything could be done for the man, the crew had to return to their action stations.

"A Turkish trader due ahead," the signalman reported.

Was this a clue to the mystery? Was this "trader" the reason the patrol boat had been

ordered out at night? What was it doing in a lane plied only by small Soviet coasters and rarely used by foreigners?

The patrol boat sped towards the Turk.

The ship was closer now and it was possible to make out her name and the faces of the Turkish sailors.

One could hardly believe that the Turk had been driven here by the wind. Therefore, there was another reason.

The rescued man lay on the deck, seemingly forgotten. But there were experienced coastguards on board. Ivan, in particular, kept glancing at the motionless body.

Suddenly Ivan thought he saw the man's eyelids tremble and half-open, as though he wanted to see where he was and what was happening round him.

Was this imagination?

No! The sailor was prepared to swear that the stranger was fully conscious.

He was about to report this to the skipper when things took an unexpected turn.

Just as the patrol boat began to draw near the Turk, the stranger sprang to his feet, dived into the sea and struck out for the Turk. In the next instant, another man—Ivan Golubets —was also in the water, showing that his

reputation as one of the best swimmers on the Black Sea was not fortuitous. The distance between him and the stranger rapidly diminished.

The Turk quickly lowered a launch. That was done with such speed that it was obvious the Turks had been prepared. The engine began to chug when the launch was still hanging in mid-air. But Ivan reached the stranger before the Turks. There was a short struggle, a powerful blow—and the sailor dragged the stunned fugitive back towards the patrol boat.

The stranger found himself on board the patrol boat for the second time. The Turks got their launch out of the sea and beat a hasty retreat. The patrol boat saw the Turkish ship to the edge of the area it was patrolling.

The stranger stood gazing sullenly at the sailors and hatred filled his eyes when he saw Ivan. The helmsman was dripping wet, breathing heavily and tingling with excitement.

An order to return to the base was received by wireless.

The mystery behind the events of that morning was revealed to Ivan and his friends a few days later.

The gist of it was that a foreign submarine had brought a professional spy to Soviet waters and left him on the sea masquerading as a shipwrecked fisherman. It was assumed that one of the Soviet freighters or passenger boats that frequently passed through this area would pick him up, treat him without any particular suspicion and take him ashore, where his accomplices were awaiting him. The Turkish ship, meanwhile, had been detailed to see how things went with him.

When the spy found himself on board a coastguard patrol boat, he knew that his game was up. He made a desperate attempt to save himself by swimming and finding refuge in the Turkish ship, but Ivan Golubets thwarted his move. This man's capture led to the exposure of a spy ring.

The squadron commander shook Ivan's hand, thanking and congratulating him.

In the years that followed, the boat patrolled the coast in fair weather and foul.

And at the wheel stood the keen-eyed and courageous Soviet coastguard Ivan Golubets.

* * *

When the Great Patriotic War broke out, the patrol boat of the coastguard squadron in

which Ivan served became part of the Soviet Black Sea Fleet and began to carry out battle assignments.

The secret war gave way to open hostilities.

Ivan had just turned twenty-five. He had reached full maturity and life had taught him to see things as they were, developed his sense of duty and steeled him morally and physically.

He was a fine helmsman and machine-gunner and was thoroughly conversant with the duties of a boatswain and signalman.

He was promoted to seaman 1st class.

Ivan read the communiqués with a heavy heart. The conviction that ultimate victory would be won by his country never left him, but it was hard to hear of towns and people left to the enemy.

On August 10, the Nazis closed a semi-circle round Odessa and the heroic defence of that major Black Sea port began.

That was exactly when Ivan got his baptism of fire.

His patrol boat was one of the vessels convoying a huge motor ship carrying thousands of women, children and old people from the besieged city.

The convoy put out in the evening, planning to pass the most dangerous places under cover of darkness. The weather was clear and the convoy could not help being spotted by air scouts.

Enemy aircraft appeared when the convoy was sailing in the region of Cape Tarkhankut.

The battle alarm was sounded.

The planes with black crosses on their wings tried to break through to the transport, but the fire from the patrol boats drove them back time and again.

The Nazis decided to settle accounts with these little vessels that were throwing up such an insurmountable curtain of fire. They divided into groups and attacked the patrol boats from different directions.

Ivan was at the helm of the patrol boat skippered by Lieutenant Salagin. The din of battle prevented him from hearing the skipper's orders. He guessed what the lieutenant wanted and intuition told him where the bombs would fall. The patrol boat zigzagged. Lieutenant Salagin kept changing his vessel's speed.

Bombs exploded, throwing up giant fountains of water. Splinters whitlend through the air. Men were hit.

The aircraft pressed their attack.

Ivan's fingers grew numb on the wheel.

First one and then another enemy aircraft burst into flames, began to lose altitude and disappeared in the sea, leaving behind a trail of black smoke.

Meanwhile, the transport continued on her way.

After the enemy had been beaten off, the motor ship sent a message of gratitude to her defenders. For the gallant sailors of the Black Sea Fleet that was the highest award.

Now battles were fought daily.

The patrol boats' activities covered a wide field. They swept the sea for mines, convoyed transports, hunted submarines, landed scouts on enemy-held territory, guarded ports and acted as messengers. They participated in the first landing operations in the Black Sea on September 22, 1941, when a task force was landed in the rear of the army laying siege to Odessa.

The clouds over the Black Sea thickened. The Nazis breached the Soviet lines on Perekop Isthmus and approached Sevastopol.

The first assault was beaten back.

Six weeks after the siege of Sevastopol began, Hitler ordered the besieging army to

capture the port at all costs by December 21, 1941. The Nazi divisions increased their pressure. The city defended itself with unparalleled tenacity. Thousands of corpses in green greatcoats lay on the heights, and in the ravines and fields around Sevastopol.

The defenders fought to the bitter end.

Preparations for an unprecedentedly bold landing operation planned by the High Command and entrusted to the Black Sea Fleet were nearing completion. The Fleet's task was to land a force in Kerch and Feodosia which would capture Kerch Peninsula, emerge in the rear of the enemy's Crimean group and disrupt the plans of the Nazis, who had not lost hope of seizing Sevastopol.

...A snowstorm raged at sea on the night of December 29, 1941.

Covered with snow, the ships carrying the task force ploughed their way through the rolling waves. Low-hanging clouds seemed to graze their masts.

One of the vessels in the squadron commanded by Captain of the 1st Rank Basisty was the patrol boat on which Ivan Golubets served. It was having a hard battle with the waves dashing against it and roaring across its deck.

The sailors felt neither cold nor tired. Excitement had been holding them in its grip since the day they learned of the operation. If the landing was successful, it would be a mortal blow for the enemy troops besieging Sevastopol and would show that the Black Sea Fleet held undivided sway in the Black Sea. This landing was a test for every sailor, a test each of them was determined to pass.

At 4 a.m., in complete darkness, the ships approached Feodosia. The Nazis had no inkling of what the next few moments had in store for them.

The battle was started by the patrol boats with commando troops on board.

The plan was to land the task force directly in the city. The patrol boats had to make it possible for the big ships to enter the port and disembark the troops. They had to destroy the boom defences and set up range light signals on the breakwaters.

At a signal from the flagship, the guns opened up. The bay grew bright with explosions. Shells blew up Nazi guns and blotted out pillboxes.

Under cover of the fire from the big ships, the patrol boats began to carry out their assignment. The patrol boat commanded by

Lieutenant Chernyak was the first to break through the boom defences and enter the harbour, paving the way for its sister vessels.

Ivan Golubets was at the helm of one of the patrol boats, manoeuvring it to help the gunners blast enemy emplacements.

The Nazis made an attempt to organize resistance. More and more shells began to burst around the patrol boats and bullets from tommy-guns screeched across their decks.

With all their guns firing, the patrol boats showed the destroyers where they could tie up. The commando groups landed from the patrol boats and carried the fighting into the streets of Feodosia. The Russian "Hurrah!" reverberated in the city.

Hundreds upon hundreds of fresh troops came ashore. Every street, every house was contested.

More and more ships came alongside the quay.

Patrol boats carried troops from the transports to the shore, evacuated the wounded, sped to where the fighting was hottest and levelled pillboxes, destroying enemy machine- and tommy-gunners.

The first echelon of the main task force was landed by daybreak.

It was then that Ivan Golubets had an opportunity of going ashore. There he saw a group of captive enemy officers and men. This was the first time he saw the enemy at such close quarters. They stood gloomily silent with downcast eyes and were black with soot and mud. How unlike representatives of the "higher race" to whom Hitler had promised world domination these ragamuffins were!

The inhabitants of Feodosia came out of cellars and shelters dug in the ground, greeting their liberators with tears of joy. They still could not make themselves believe that there were Soviet sailors and soldiers in the city.

An old, emaciated woman went up to Ivan, shook his hand and said:

"Thank you!"

In the city the fighting was dying down.

The men of the Black Sea Fleet had passed the test with flying colours, but that did not complete the operation.

Forced out of Feodosia, the Nazis resisted at the approaches to the city.

Enemy aircraft attacked in waves.

The battle continued.

People all over the country, listening to their wireless sets on New Year's Eve, heard the announcer say:

"On December 29 and 30, troops of the Caucasian Front with the support of units of the Black Sea Fleet landed in the Crimea and, after heavy fighting, occupied the city and fortress of Kerch and the city of Feodosia.

"Troops commanded by General Pervushin and General Lvov and naval forces commanded by Captain of the 1st Rank Basisty particularly distinguished themselves in the capture of Kerch and Feodosia."

Ivan Golubets thus met New Year in battle and experienced the thrill of victory.

* * *

A lull set in in Sevastopol.... Of course, it was only a very relative lull, for the enemy was bringing up his forces for his third assault. The Black Sea fortress strengthened its defences, marshalling its forces in order to give the enemy a reception he would long remember.

There was no time for rest. That concerned the patrol boats as well. In all weather, at all hours of the day and night they put out to sea, escorting caravans of ships through the narrow fairways, meeting them and leading them out.

With all the means they had, the Nazis sought to sever Soviet sea communications and stop the passage of ships and transports bringing reinforcements and supplies to the besieged city.

The sea was infested with U-boats. Torpedo-plane and bombers hunted Soviet ships.

Enemy aircraft dropped mines in the bays and fairways almost every night and at dawn fast patrol boats would race through these mine-fields, dropping depth charges that detonated the mines. The speed of these little vessels was what saved them in this difficult, dangerous and exhausting work which required self-control and cool heads.

The most important part of it was to keep the patrol boats dead on their course and that is where Ivan Golubets showed his skill.

These were the very months when he prepared to join the Communist Party.

His 26th birthday was round the corner and his life's record proved he was worthy of becoming a Communist, but he thought he was not sufficiently prepared and therefore not entitled to that high honour.

Frequently he asked himself whether he had made use of all the opportunities of repaying

his Homeland for what it had given him. He searched about him to see if there was anything else he could do to show his devotion to his country.

He was always ready to carry out any order his homeland gave him even at the cost of his life.

He awaited the orders of his country. But nobody ordered him. Of his own accord he went and carried out what seemed to be the impossible....

* * *

The train of his thoughts was snapped by the firing of A.A. guns in Sevastopol. Nazi aircraft were again swooping down upon the city.

He sprang to his feet and saw the ships raising the air-raid signal.

A spotter Heinkel appeared over the bay—a sure indication that the enemy was about to shell the bay. The Heinkel was escorted by Messerschmidts. Soviet fighters threw themselves at the enemy.

The last of the patrol boats that had gone for depth charges had only just tied up to unload its lethal cargo. To avoid accidents, the patrol boats had come into the bay singly....

Ivan raced to his ship.

He heard the whine of an approaching shell and stopped.

The shell exploded near the patrol boat with big and small depth charges piled up on its deck.

The second shell landed to the right of the vessel.

The third shell hit the pier gangway right beside where the patrol boat had just made fast.

Splinters pierced the vessel's side and started a fire in the engine room. A terrible danger hung over the ships in the bay as was all too apparent to the people on shore who saw the smoke coming from the patrol boat.

There could be no question of rushing to help the crew put the fire out. That would only start an unnecessary commotion on the burning vessel and hinder the crew. The fire was extinguished in a few minutes.

On the patrol boat and on shore men sighed with relief.

Everybody clearly visualized what would have happened if the fire on the patrol boat had not been brought under control. A tremendous explosion would have destroyed everything and everybody in the bay and on shore.

The squadron commander at once ordered the patrol boat to move to another place, but the engines failed to respond and a sister vessel was ordered to take it in tow.

But what happened in the next moment shattered the accepted military conception that shells never land in one and the same spot twice, for the pier gangway was hit again and the patrol boat blazed out like a huge torch. Burning petrol spurted out of a pierced cistern. The men on board were swept off the deck by the blast. It was obvious that the flames could not be put out this time.

Smoke rose in a pillar to the sky.

A catastrophic explosion was inevitable. Something had to be done. But what? Death and destruction was in the air.

"Comrades, there's a man on the patrol boat!" somebody shouted suddenly.

Indeed, the figure of a sailor could be made out through the flames and smoke.

"Who is it? Who?"

Finally, the hero was recognized:

"Ivan Golubets!"

Like everybody else, Ivan saw the flames bursting out and enveloping the patrol boat and realized the danger.

He rushed to the vessel and fought his way through the fire to the stern, to where the big depth charges were.

Ivan tried the lever of the bomb release, but the mechanism had been put out of action when the cistern exploded. Without wasting time, he threw back the rear grid of the release, rolled out a heavy charge and pushed it overboard.

His jumper smouldered. Smoke bit into his eyes. It became increasingly difficult to breathe.

Another charge went overboard, then another and another....

Ivan rushed to the other side of the patrol boat and rolled the charges off into the water even faster than before.

What he had accomplished by this time had already made his feat immortal even if he had chosen to leave the burning patrol boat at this stage. He had averted the main danger by considerably lessening the force of the inevitable explosion.

"Golubets, run!" people shouted from the pier.

But he did not run. He could not for he had not done all that could be done.

The blaze swelled, the flames searing the hero's face and hands. Machine-gun cartridges and shells began to go off in their cases.

Gasping for breath and almost losing consciousness, Ivan made for the small depth charges.

In the smoke he felt for the racks, took the charges down in pairs and heaved them overboard.

His whole body was covered with burns. Only one single step separated him from the cool water. He only had to take that step to find relief from the unbearable pain, stop his eyes from watering and fill his lungs with the salty, bracing sea air. Only that one step separated him from safety!

But he could not make himself take that step.

There still were a few charges left in the racks.

Ivan took them down, stepped to the side and leaned over to throw them into the water.

That was the last the sailors hurrying to the patrol boat saw of their cheerful Komsomol friend.

An explosion rent the air.

The ships, the buildings on the shore and

the people escaped the destruction that nothing on earth had seemed able to prevent.

Ivan Golubets alone parted with his life.

He parted with life to win immortality.

That happened on March 25, 1942.

* * *

On June 14, 1942, Ivan Golubets was posthumously decorated with the title of Hero of the Soviet Union by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R.

On the next day, *Pravda* wrote in its leader:

"History will preserve the memory of the deathless feat performed by coastguard Ivan Golubets, who at the cost of his own life saved the patrol boats anchored near by and their crews. . . ."

The patent of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. conferring the title of Hero of the Soviet Union on Ivan Golubets was sent to his parents and with it was enclosed a letter from Nikolai Shvernik, then President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., who said that Ivan's feat "will never be forgotten by our people."

Indeed, the memory of Ivan Golubets is cherished by the Soviet people.

The *Ivan Golubets*, a coastguard patrol boat, fought in the decisive battles when the Soviet troops finally crushed the Nazis.

A light-grey stone obelisk ending in a five-pointed star has been erected near the spot where Ivan Golubets performed his exploit.

Passers-by stop to look at the manly, open young face on the oval medallion fixed to the obelisk.

On the other sides of the obelisk are depicted Ivan Golubets' decorations—the Order of the Patriotic War 1st Degree and the medals For the Defence of Odessa and For the Defence of Sevastopol.

This modest memorial can be seen from far off, and when a fast coastguard patrol boat goes by there is sure to be a sailor who silently pays tribute to the hero.

Annually, on March 25, a naval guard of honour fires a salute in front of the monument.

The memory of Ivan Golubets has been perpetuated both in Sevastopol and in Taganrog. His name is borne by Young Pioneer detachments, and streets have been named after him.

Special stands are devoted to him in the Sevastopol Naval Museum, in Chekhov School No. 2 in Taganrog, and in the club

of the Andreyev Iron and Steel Works in Taganrog.

On a column in the works' sheet-rolling department, where the hero worked, there is a memorial plaque.

The life story and exploit of Ivan Golubets, whose name is linked with the name of Sevastopol for all time to come, are known throughout the Navy.

When people speak of the defence of Sevastopol in 1854-55, they revive the memory of admirals Nakhimov and Kornilov, the sailor Koshka, the nurse Dasha.... When they speak of the defence of Sevastopol in 1941-42, they call to remembrance Political Organizer Filchenkov, who with hand-grenades in his hands threw himself under an enemy tank, the hero of Pillbox No. 11 Kalyuzhny, who was a member of the Komsomol, the girl machine-gunner Nina Onilova, and the coastguard Ivan Golubets.

The young sailor is not dead, no; he remains on watch for ever.

Y. Levakovskaya

ON FLAMING SOIL

In the small hours of November 1, a marine battalion boarded landing craft quickly and in perfect order. That was the result of long and what sometimes seemed tedious training. Every man knew where his craft was and the shortest way to his place in it. There were no hitches. From the Taman Peninsula, the vessels passed through the straits and headed for the Crimean shore, which was invisible in the gloom.

From the pier beneath the towering cliff, the sky with its cold autumn stars seemed to be very far away. Now the receding cliffs seemed to be growing smaller, while the sky came down low over the sea, stintingly illuminating the foam-crested waves.

The white line of the surf melted away. Tsemes Bay was left behind somewhere to

the right. Novorossiisk.... There was no Novorossiisk now, only its ruins. Galya Petrova had lived and studied in that city before the war.

One could say that there was no longer a Galya Petrova, too. There was First Sergeant Galina Petrova.

Galya drew her hand out of her warm pocket and touched her spray-covered left shoulder-strap. How proud she was of these straps with their broad white stripes and gold letters! It had not been easy to win them.

A breaker rushed past the low side of the launch; the waves cut by the vessel boiled angrily at its stern. The force of the wind was rising and the sea was no longer murmuring as before, but roaring. The broad, flat launch or "sandal," as the sailors condescendingly called it, rolled over the waves as though there were pits and bumps.

Galya clenched her teeth, fighting the seasickness creeping over her and trying to bring herself to think that she should make an effort to go to sleep as there would be no time for it later. The sea-wise marines were probably asleep, she told herself. Or were they?

It is doubtful if anybody slept. The men knew there would be hard fighting, for their task was to storm Kerch Peninsula, which the Nazis had strongly fortified, and they could count on artillery support only from the long-range guns on Taman Peninsula and in Tuzla.

The marines were armed with machine-guns, anti-tank rifles, tommy-guns and hand-grenades. Galya thought with satisfaction that she could handle any of these weapons as well as the men. She would not be a burden to them even in the hottest of battles. She would not have to hold her tongue as had been the case during the first days of the war.

She had just turned twenty when she went to the enlistment centre and asked to be sent to the front. Her application was turned down and her conversation with the military commissar was heard by a fat Armyman with badges on his tunic and a young sailor with stern, thoughtful eyes, who smoked cigarette after cigarette.

When the three of them went out of the building, the Armyman burst out laughing, stroked his badges and said to Galya:

"What you can do is of no use to us now, and there's nothing else you know how to do."

He glanced at the sailor, probably expecting him to laugh, but the sailor did not laugh. Galya did not laugh either, nor did she blush.

The fat man was the one who flushed with a sideways look at the girl. She had a high, rounded forehead that was not at all feminine, wide-awake eyes with remarkably keen pupils, and a mocking mouth. He half expected her to lecture him and in a way that would make him feel small.

The sailor too was looking at the girl.

"Go on home, sister," he said simply. "War is not a woman's business."

Galya, who had had no intention of objecting to what the fat man had said, realized that there was really nothing for her to do at the front and that she would have to learn something.

So she enrolled in a nursing school in Krasnodar.

In the grim year of 1941, when Leningrad was cut off by the enemy and the firing lines were at the approaches to Moscow, it was not only unbearably difficult but impossible not to think of this every hour, every minute. Study was the only answer.

In a small house on the outskirts of Krasnodar, a girl sat in front of an open textbook

with her elbows resting on the table. The shimmering light from a paraffin lamp fell on her dark forehead that set off her fair, wavy hair. She had to exclude all thoughts about Moscow, about the air-raid and commit to memory the intricate paths of blood in the human body. The hip artery.... Where must one press it to stop a haemorrhage? The fingers had to learn to find the spot automatically. On the battlefield there would be no time to remember.

And the girl doggedly studied, checking her ability to tie the various bandages over and over again.

Before her was a tiny wrist-watch, a present from her mother. She allowed herself ten minutes of rest every hour, ten minutes in which to dream of becoming a doctor after the war, of the discoveries she would make. She was sure she would benefit the world! One had to take an unblazed path in life, to carve one's own trail into the future. What a noble profession medicine was! It would be needed by people in all ages.

Before the enemy approached Novorossiisk, people never thought that they would have to defend their city. Galya was tortured by the thought that the war would end before she

would be able to do anything to help her country.

In the autumn of 1942, when Galya Petrova again went to the enlistment centre and volunteered for service in the Army, she was not turned down. She was offered work in a hospital, but she insisted on being sent to the front.

The doctor, a small, outwardly irritable man with a red, wrinkled neck like a turkey's, looked over his glasses, which he had pushed down to the tip of his nose, at the short and not very strong-looking girl.

"You see, miss, in Mongolia I once heard a proverb which says: It is not enough to prostrate yourself at the feet of your teacher, you must have the strength to fight for him. My point is that to carry a wounded man one must be strong. Devotion alone will not get you anywhere. Do you understand, my child?" he asked, ending on an unexpectedly gentle note and pushing his glasses back to the bridge of his nose.

"But I am strong," Galya said quietly. "I'm sure I am strong enough for the job."

Galya was enlisted as a nurse in a marine battalion. In the battle for her native Novorossiisk, she bandaged and carried wounded

men in the face of heavy fire and earned the love and respect of the marines, which was not a simple thing to do.

There, at the approaches to Novorossiisk, when for the first time the man she had dragged away from the battle died in her arms, a lump she could not control rose to her throat. As she looked at the still face of the man whose wound she had so painstakingly bandaged in conformity with all the rules she forgot about the battle and about the danger. Her shoulders shook.

Meanwhile, the battle continued. There was work to be done. A marine, who was in the trench beside her, hurriedly changing a cartridge clip in his rifle, said with sympathetic reproach:

"Here, this won't do. You fight like a marine but sob your eyes out like a woman. That definitely won't do."

Galya learned to restrain her tears. She learned to master her fear. And her duties no longer seemed unusual or difficult.

Formerly, Galya thought the words military skill sounded strange when used together, for skill meant time, patience and labour, while the war meant selfless courage, a burning

desire to do everything possible for one's country.

Frequently now she recalled what the wrinkled doctor had told her at the enlistment office. He was right. Devotion alone will not get you far.

In October 1943, Galya was transferred to a marine battalion commanded by Major Belyakov.Day and night, the battalion trained for a landing on Kerch Peninsula. Veteran marines marvelled at Galya's doggedness to become proficient with a rifle, a tommy-gun, a machine-gun, a mortar, an anti-tank rifle....

On the eve of the operation, together with the whole battalion, First Sergeant Galina Petrova took the oath: "Our only law will be to push ahead!" What proud words. They brought to mind Yelena in Turgenev's *On the Eve*, who said: "Liberate his country! The very sound of these words is terrible, so great are they...."

Suddenly Galya blinked. A blinding ray of light caught the launch, revealing the figures of men made formless as they lay covered with cloaks, the flat peakless caps, the blunt muzzle of a machine-gun. The men stirred.

One of them rose to his feet and said, untying the cord of his cloak under his chin:

"They've begun."

Galya heard the roar of aircraft. German "lamps" sailed down on parachutes from out of the blackness of the sky, illuminating the launches. Waves howled like whirlwinds as they rose to the sky now on one side of the launch now on the other as though the raging sea too wanted to drown the treacherously indifferent light of the flares.

The marines, with Galya among them, peered into the distance. The Crimean shore was already in sight, drawing rapidly nearer, belching forth shaggy glows of explosions and red bursts of machine-gun fire.

The flat-bottomed vessel drove into the sand.

Galya sprang out, following the marines, and in the next instant found herself fighting to keep her balance on the ground. It was all she could do to keep after the marines through the wet, oosy sand. At once it became hot. Galya ran on, doing her utmost not to lag behind.

For some unaccountable reason the pace slowed down. Galya stopped to catch her breath, wiping the sweat and sand off her face

with a quick movement of her hand. She could not understand why the men were standing motionless under fire. She took another few steps forward and found herself in front of barbed-wire entanglements.

"Mine-field. Sappers, here!" somebody yelled.

"Sappers? We'll have to wait a long time for them." Galya could not remember whether she said or only thought this. An anger she had never known before seized her at the sight of these wet barbs, this rusty wire that had forced them to a halt. Her mind filled with this anger, she somehow climbed over the wire, scratching the palms of her hands, and ran forward across the dark, far-flung field.

She had gone quite far when suddenly she stopped dead, not because she was wounded or frightened but because she realized that she was alive. Did that mean there was a passage here? An indescribable joy filled her as though the field she had been the first to cross was the very land that had to be liberated. Happily, she ran back to her comrades and cried out at the top of her voice:

"Comrades, there are no mines here! Look, there are no mines at all here!"

The girl's voice made such a strange, animating sound amid the booming of artillery fire that everybody heard it.

Galya made a clumsy figure in her heavy greatcoat as she skipped and stamped her feet quite like a child in that stretch of no man's land.

The marines rushed after her, capturing the first and strongest line of fortifications, a fishing village and an anti-tank ditch.

Fighting went on all night and all the next day.

Tanks came up to the ditch, firing at point-blank range. In the course of four hours the marines fought back nineteen counter-attacks. Towards evening only six of the men and Galya remained alive on the right flank of the ditch.

She bandaged the wounded, reloaded the tommy-guns and, when the enemy attacked, stood shoulder to shoulder with the men.

That was the beginning of a long-drawn battle on land which became known as "Flaming Soil." Ammunition ran short and the marines swam to the half-sunken launches for it; there was not enough food and no tobacco. But the bridgehead was held.

A comparative lull set in one day: the Nazis

stopped their attacks to bring up fresh troops. The sun, big and red, was setting beyond the heaving sea. Touching the horizon, it settled heavily and rapidly began to sink into the water.

Galya gazed at the sun which seemed to be fluid like the yoke of an egg and it suddenly struck her that she had not seen it for many days. It had shown itself in the sky but she had had no time to look at it. She was drowsy with fatigue, but somehow she felt stronger than ever before. Her last thought before she fell asleep was that they had been well-trained and that if need arose she could do something important.

That day news was received of the decorations that had been awarded to men of the battalion.

The girl slept soundly, curled up against the side of the ditch with her hands in the pockets of her splinter-torn padded jacket. She slept oblivious of the fame that was now hers, of the title of Hero that her country had given her, of the fact that millions of girls and young men would read and think about her with the same thrill as she had when she thought of Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya, Liza Chaikina, Natasha Kovsheva....

M. Kolesnikov

FROM THE BED OF THE SEA

A savage wind was tearing silvery scraps of foam off the crests of the waves and hurling them skywards. The armoured patrol boat quivered from stem to stern as its sharp prow dug into the water and then it settled back on its stern again. The booming waves lashed the vessel's side, putting it off its course.

Of the crew, Viktor Oos, the helmsman, was having the hardest time of it. With his feet set wide apart, he stood at the helm and tensely peered into the uncertain gloom that was hiding the shore. At regular intervals, a mass of water crashed down on the deck, drenching the helmsman from head to foot; his teeth chattered from the cold. Yet, this was exactly the time when he had to be especially alert: the slightest swerve off the course could

take the cutter into the arms of the enemy. But Viktor Oos was sure of himself, sure that even in mad weather like this he would keep the armoured cutter unerringly on the set course. This was not the first time that he was taking his small vessel to the mountainous shore through stormy weather. Hard as a nut, the patrol boat feared neither wind nor waves. A meeting with enemy ships or aircraft was a different matter, for that spelt mortal danger.

From the moment the landing operations began, the patrol boat's entire crew had only one thought in mind and that was to run arms and ammunition to the Crimean shore, where Soviet troops were fighting to liberate Soviet soil.

At this very moment, the troops were probably impatiently waiting for the ammunition the patrol boat was taking to them. They cheered every time it arrived. Because of the surf and the shallow water, it would stop about a mile and a half from the shore. As always, launches would come to meet it and take the ammunition. After that the crew could turn homeward with a sense of a duty fulfilled.

Viktor Oos loved the sea. He knew his job thoroughly and when there was a need could substitute for the gunner. On one occasion he had ensured communication between the armoured patrol boats and a spotting post. He swam across the Volga seven times, repaired communication lines under enemy mortar fire fourteen times. But he loved his job of helmsman best of all, he loved the feel of his vessel as it sped through the waves.

The helmsman had given a good account of himself in the Battle of Stalingrad, when ammunition had to be carried to the right bank of the Volga in darkness. Ice was flowing down the river. The light from rockets and explosions gave momentary glimpses of the skeletons of ruined buildings and towering heaps of rubble. The hero city of Stalingrad loomed in front.... The patrol boat steered by Viktor Oos moved inexorably towards the right bank, driving its bows into the ice and crushing it. But the enemy's guns covered the fairway day and night. And on nights like this, the vessels needed skilful helmsmen with tremendous self-control.

When the patrol boat entered the zone of fire, an enemy shell went through the armour

of the wheel-house. A splinter wounded Viktor in the leg. The patrol boat veered sharply to the left. The helmsman thought he would lose consciousness from the terrible pain in his leg. Biting his lips until they bled, he kept the cutter on its course through the shelling and ice. A few minutes later he was wounded again and had to be carried below, to the crew's quarters. The helm was taken over by the skipper, but soon Viktor was told that he too had been wounded.

"What's going to happen to the patrol boat?" he thought.

He could not remain below any longer. With a resolve that was terrible to see, he rose to his feet and with the help of a machine-gunner reached the wheel-house, where he again took charge of the helm.

The patrol boat reached its destination, bringing ammunition, medicines and food to Stalingrad.

But that was a page out of the past. Now battles were raging for the Crimea. Would the patrol boat safely deliver its cargo this time as well?

What happened in the next few minutes was what Viktor feared the most. The patrol boat was already within sight of the shore when

the silhouettes of enemy ships—two mine-layers and a number of patrol vessels and torpedo-boats—appeared on the horizon.

The enemy noticed the armoured patrol boat and opened fire.

Viktor tightened his grip on the helm. It seemed to him that the vessel was moving too slowly. The shore was in plain sight. Motor launches, sent by the troops waiting for the ammunition, came into view. Every minute the launches drew nearer. If only the patrol boat could hold out until they came alongside! Perhaps then they would manage to transfer the boxes to them. After all, there had been cases of ships being unloaded under enemy fire and successfully at that.

Shell splinters moaned over the deck, cutting into the sides and superstructures. Columns of water rose around the armoured patrol boat. Viktor manoeuvred to avoid getting a direct hit, heading for the splashes. He was one with the helm now and the vessel, obedient to his will, swerved and turned this way and that.

Suddenly there was a crash on the boat's stern and in the next instant the whole vessel was enveloped in smoke. The damage in the

engine-room was reported to the bridge. The lights failed. The helm jammed. The vessel went out of control.

"Use the emergency helm," came the voice of the skipper. But it was already too late for that: the vessel began to sink rapidly. Viktor felt the deck sliding under him and in a few moments found himself in icy water. He unclenched his fingers and with a few powerful strokes swam clear of the sinking patrol boat. There were sailors in the water near him and the launches were hurrying to pick them up in the face of enemy fire.

The armoured patrol boat disappeared, taking with it the work of many men. It was impossible to reconcile oneself with this, for on shore the landing party was desperately in need of supplies.

A strong swimmer, Viktor could reach the shore without the help of the launches. But at the moment his own safety worried him least of all. He swam about on the spot where a few minutes before the disabled patrol boat had been rocking on the waves. He took a deep breath and dived. It was as he had thought—they were in shallow water. He opened his eyes and saw the vague, shifting

outlines of the armoured patrol boat. Boxes of ammunition were piled up on its deck. Viktor seized one of them and swam to the surface.

"Hey, you there, on the launch! Grab hold of this!" he shouted hoarsely.

He was heard. The launch came up and willing hands took the box from him.

"Half a mo.... There's more where this came from." He dived and soon reappeared with another box.

The water foamed and gurgled round him, sometimes a wave hid him and only his hands could be seen.... Enemy shells were landing somewhere quite near. Machine-gun bullets traced a pattern a hair's breadth away from his head.

But Viktor noticed nothing. Somewhat recovering his breath, he disappeared in the water again and again, coming up each time with a heavy box. His strength began to ebb. The muscles of his feet contracted. His clothes seemed to grow heavier and heavier. He knew that he could not keep this up much longer. He had salvaged twelve boxes of ammunition, but there were many more such boxes on the sunken vessel. They had to be won from the sea. He was determined to

carry on as long as he could. Other men joined him in this work. His selflessness, his desire to save the ammunition at all costs, infected them. They too went down to the deck of the sunken cutter for the boxes of ammunition. The other launches joined in.

Viktor was gasping for breath. His lungs were almost bursting from the incredible tension. Yet he wanted to dive again and again.

"Enough, enough!" his comrades shouted. "You'll drown."

"No. There are many more ... there...."

Through the delirium that was overpowering him he felt somebody seizing him by his armpits. He did not remember anything else.

He recovered consciousness on shore. He opened his eyes and quickly shut them again: the sunlight dazzled him. Somebody had solicitously covered him with a blanket and he felt warm and cosy. Men were talking near by.

"A sailor for you, all right," someone said in a bass voice. "Salvaged forty cases of ammo. Under artillery fire! Hard to believe, isn't it?"

"Yes, but it's a fact," said another voice. "This Oos's got plenty of pluck. I heard about him before: distinguished himself at Stalingrad and won the Order of the Red Banner. In short, a man of the sea."

Viktor's eyes were open now. It was noticed. An infantry officer came up, bent over him, gently shook him by the hand and said with emotion in his voice:

"Thanks, sailor. Thanks from all of us."

M. Abramov

BATTLE AT SUNRISE

The night was dark and cold. Heavy, low-hanging clouds crawled in an endless bank over the sea and a gusty wind blew from the west, howling ominously in the taut shrouds.

Anxious for the men in his charge, Senior Lieutenant Sivenko tore his eyes off the compass and pilot's chart from time to time and tensely looked at the deck, but there was inky darkness round him and he could see no one. To port, on the side of the open sea, enormous waves boomed at regular intervals, their foam-clad crests rising above the man-rope and crashing down on the patrol boat with a low rumble. The bitter-salt spray, caught by the wind, dashed against the skipper, the helmsman and the signalman on the bridge.

For more than six hours now the coast-guard patrol boat had been escorting a big

transport loaded with arms and ammunition. She, too, was invisible in the darkness and the lieutenant could tell her position only by the loud throb of her engines, which even the noise of the riotous waves could not smother.

The wind began to blow harder. Towards morning bright gaps appeared in the clouds, revealing an occasional star which twinkled with a cold green brilliance. Sivenko took another glance. The gunners, machine-gunners and ammunition carriers, were at their posts, standing with their faces to the wind and spray and peering through the pre-dawn veil of darkness into the distance. After an all-night vigil on the wet deck swept by an icy wind, they were keeping watch as the regulations required. That gladdened the skipper, for it showed he had a well-trained, duty-conscious crew.

The sailors wore grim, concentrated looks. The voice of the skipper was all that broke the tense silence.

"Two degrees to starboard by the compass."

"Two degrees to starboard by the compass, it is," the helmsman promptly repeated.

"What's the compass showing?"

"160."

"Hold it."

"Hold it, it is."

Nobody else spoke.

Before the patrol boat left the base, Sivenko had a talk with the gunners and machine-gunners, explaining the situation to them. Later, throughout the night, he had had no opportunity of exchanging a word with the crew. Now, when the grey dawn was beginning to break, the skipper smiled at Grigory Kuropyatnikov, who was standing beside his machine-gun near the bridge, and asked in a gay tone:

"A little wind hasn't frozen your blood, has it? I suppose you want to stretch your legs?"

The machine-gunner looked up with his black, lively eyes, assumed a dignified air, gave his wet tarpaulin jacket, which he wore over his pea-jacket, a tug and answered smartly in a tone to suit the skipper's:

"There's hot blood in a Black Sea sailor. Wants more than a little wind to freeze it."

From the bridge the short and stocky machine-gunner looked like a boy. But his shipmates knew him to be courageous and capable of great endurance. His life as a sailor, which had begun before the war on a

coastguard vessel, had steeled him and made him strong and taught him to be quick and agile. Sivenko was fond of him, for he knew Kuropyatnikov would pass the sternest of tests. After receiving his baptism of fire on the frontier, in the mouth of the Danube, he had faced danger again and again.

The skipper liked Kuropyatnikov's ready reply.

"So the blood of a Black Sea sailor doesn't freeze, you say?" Sivenko smiled. "Still, if I were you I'd button up my jacket."

"It's wet and tight around the shoulders. I hate anything to hamper my movements." Kuropyatnikov glanced at the sky and pointed to a wide gap in the clouds and, with sudden gravity, added: "We may have some exercise after all. It looks as though the horizon will soon be clear. We can expect the vultures then. I may as well leave my jacket unbuttoned."

"I expect you're right," Sivenko agreed.

This conversation was heard by the men on deck. As was usual at this pre-dawn hour, the wind began to abate and the waves gradually calmed down, their shaggy tops no longer hitting the deck and spraying guns and men. Without waiting for orders, the men pulled the

tarpaulin hoods off the guns and machine-guns and checked the sights and locks.

In the Black Sea Fleet, the crew of the SK-65 was known as a close-knit, fighting body of men. The harmony on board the patrol boat had been born and strengthened in fierce engagements with the Nazis, in active service beginning with the first battle at dawn on June 22, 1941, when men of the coastguard courageously defended the state frontier on the Danube against an enemy who attacked without warning. Twenty-one months had passed since that day—months in which the SK-65 was continuously on duty. It had convoyed a hundred and eighteen transports with arms and ammunition, landed more than two thousand officers and men near Sevastopol, Kerch and Novorossiisk, fought scores of actions against Nazi torpedo-boats and aircraft. The patrol boat had shot down six enemy planes.

Senior Lieutenant Sivenko had unbounded faith in the courage and staunchness of every member of his crew and always set out on an assignment with the knowledge that he had a good chance of success.

In the evening of March 24, 1943, he was summoned to the headquarters of the Tuapse

Naval Base. The assignment he was given was not an easy one: his job was to take advantage of the darkness and escort a transport with arms and ammunition for the troops holding the enemy back near Novorossiisk.

After the defeat at Stalingrad, the Nazi command had developed feverish activity on the Southern Front, seeking to retain its foothold in the Crimea and along the Caucasian seaboard at any price. For that reason, Sivenko and his battle-wise crew were fully aware that on that night they could expect a "surprise" prepared by the Nazis. The fast coastguard cutter had made a name for itself for the boldness of its attacks and the clever way it always escaped bombing by Nazi aircraft, but the responsibility of safely getting the transport to its destination weighed on the mind of every member of the crew.

The night passed peacefully. White bow-waves, raised by Nazi torpedo-boats, were spotted only in one place by the signalman. The boats quickly disappeared into the impenetrable gloom, evidently wishing to avoid a clash. However, this meeting in the night worried the crew, for the torpedo-boats could easily give the transport's bearings to aircraft.

The patrol boat was now only a few miles from its destination—familiar landmarks could already be made out on the shore.

Ivan Perevozchikov, one of the gunners and Grigory Kuropyatnikov's bosom friend from the time the two men were frontier guards, cupped his hands and shouted from his post at the for'ard gun:

"Wake up, Grigory, or you'll break your machine-gun with your nose!"

Kuropyatnikov, who had at this moment been lost in thought, turned at the sound of his friend's voice and smiled.

"I wonder if it was you who snored so loudly last night that I couldn't hear the engines?" he said, screwing up his dark, merry eyes and laughing.

The friends exchanged banter for banter. Perevozchikov was about to go up to Kuropyatnikov to offer him some especially strong tobacco and smoke a rolled cigarette with him when the signalman reported to the skipper:

"Port 35. Aircraft."

The alarm was sounded. Increasing speed, the patrol boat began to go round the transport on the portside in an effort to take the plane off its course. The pilot evidently saw through this manoeuvre, for he veered sharply

to the right and climbed steeply. Then, after tracing a big circle, he made for the transport from the sternside. But the patrol boat was already there with all its guns firing. The shells exploded in the aircraft's course and the Nazi disappeared after releasing his bombs wide off the mark.

"Well, Ivan, stretched your legs a bit?" Kuropyatnikov asked with a glance at the gunner.

"By way of morning exercise," replied the tall and powerfully built Perevozchikov, but his grey eyes were grave and there was no note of merriment in his voice.

Sivenko signalled to the transport's skipper to hug the shore and try to increase speed. The port was close at hand and once there the shore batteries could cover the transport. However, another unforeseen complication arose. The port informed the transport that the entrance to the bay was mined and that the ship could not be received. It would have to remain in the outer roadstead.

Meanwhile, the signalman noticed seventeen black dots in the now cloudless sky. They rapidly grew bigger and the wind carried the low roar of aircraft engines to the patrol boat.

Sivenko remembered that near the shore,

exactly opposite the spot the transport was now passing, there was a sunken barge. Its deck superstructures and part of its sides were sticking out of the water. Sivenko signalled to the transport's skipper to turn his vessel shoreward and reduce speed to the minimum.

Approaching the ships, the Nazis divided into three groups and, forming a ring, attacked. Sivenko had been correct in his guess that the pilots would take the barge for another transport, for that was exactly what happened. Six planes began to bomb and machine-gun the motionless target. Chips of wood and iron flew in all directions from the barge.

The patrol boat traced a semicircle astern of the transport, covering her with its guns. The Nazis kept well away from the shore, evidently afraid to come within range of the shore batteries. They tried to get at the transport from the stern, but the fire from the patrol boat kept them off. Failing in that, they decided to concentrate on the patrol boat. Another thirty enemy aircraft appeared in the sky.

Bombs exploded to the port and starboard of the SK-65, the water boiled, rising in plumes above the deck-house. Splinters

screeched across the deck. Machine-gun bullets tore at the welding. Grigory Kuropyatnikov, his eyes fixed on the sights, rapidly moved his machine-gun up and down, to the right and left as he fired. The sinister black swastikas on the yellow wings looking like crossed snakes were somersaulting one minute, shooting into the sky the next, then dropping like a stone to the very surface of the water. Straining all his strength, Kuropyatnikov held the black swastikas in his sights, doggedly firing his machine-gun at them.

His swarthy face, always smiling when he talked to friends, now wore a stern, preoccupied look. His black hair stuck to his temples in wet strands, and sweat, thick as machine-oil, streamed from beneath them.

He was being devoured by a craving to shoot down these black crosses, these yellow wings. He was oblivious to everything—the sea, the ship, his mates—except the screaming aircraft streaking into the sky, dropping out of the round-about and going into a dive. He felt nothing except the vibration of the large-calibre machine-gun that seemed to have become merged with his hands.

He neither saw nor heard a big bomb exploding almost on the bow of the patrol boat

and splinters from it mortally wounding his friend Ivan Perevozchikov. Ivan's place was taken by gunner Sklyar, who had the gun firing without a moment's delay.

The blast from the next explosion tore the gun off its trunnions as though it were a chip of wood. Deafened by the explosion and gravely wounded by splinters, gunner Sklyar was flung away from the gun and he collapsed on the blood-drenched deck. The for'ard gun and its crew were now out of action. The deck, deck-house and bridge were riddled by hundreds of splinters and bullets. The mast was split in two. Water was noisily pouring into the holes in the sides and filling the compartments....

The aircraft attacked again and again, discharging bombs and firing their machine-guns. Not for a moment did Kuropyatnikov allow the black crosses to elude his sights. Suddenly he felt a bitter smell of burning choking him. A wisp of suffocating smoke floated in front of his face. Tearing his eyes away from the sights, he looked about him. A dense, curling line of brown smoke extended from the stern. The thought flashed through his mind that that was where the smoke-boxes were lashed to depth charges.

How many seconds were left before a terrible explosion snuffed out the cutter?

Stumbling and falling on the deck which was scarred by bullets and shell-splinters, Kuropyatnikov dashed to the burning smoke-boxes. The wind was already fanning the fire and long, yellow tongues of flame were licking the iron cases of the depth charges. Ignoring the danger, Kuropyatnikov dropped to his knees in front of the depth charges and stretched his hands out to seize the ropes and undo the knot....

He neither knew nor remembered when he had been wounded—his nerves were so strained—but now, as his hands closed over the knot, an excruciating pain shot through him. The wrist of his left hand was shattered and the sleeve of his pea-jacket was soaked with blood. A feeling of desperation and helplessness overcame him. Meanwhile the fire raged on, the acrid smoke crept past his blurred vision, choking him, and the burning smoke-boxes crackled. The sharp, exhausting pain was beginning to overwhelm his whole body.

There was no time to be lost. He had to do something, and quickly too. Protecting his face from the flames with his wounded hand and blood-dampened sleeve, he bent down

and began to gnaw the end of the lashing with his teeth. The fire singed his hair, burnt his face but he went on biting through strand after strand of the strong, tarred rope. After what seemed an age, it snapped, freeing the smoke-boxes. Kuropyatnikov rose from his knees and kicked the boxes overboard and they hissed as they hit the water and sank.

Breathing with relief and wiping the sweat and blood off his burnt face, he went quietly to his machine-gun, supporting himself on the man-rope. After he had gone a few steps, he noticed somebody's hand stretching out from the side of the vessel and frantically reaching for the man-rope. Glancing over the side, he saw Anatoly Grigoryev, the cutter's cook, who had tirelessly carried ammunition for his machine-gun during the battle. The blast of an explosion had carried him overboard. Bending over the man-rope, Kuropyatnikov stretched his sound hand to the sailor and pulled him up to the deck. There was blood on Grigoryev's face and chest, his breath came in gasps. The sailors silently looked at each other. Both could scarcely keep on their feet. In the meantime, the aircraft continued attacking the transport and the cutter. Kuropyatnikov went up close to the sailor and said in a low voice:

"Bring up the ammo, Anatoly," and, squeezing the sailor's shoulder with his fingers, added gently: "It must be done, pal...."

The sailor nodded. In a few minutes the starboard machine-gun was again spitting bullets at the black crosses and yellow wings. The bursts were not as long as before, there were pauses, but nonetheless the machine-gun was hitting out at the enemy and together with the other guns did not give the Nazi pilots a chance to break through to the transport.

Kuropyatnikov regained consciousness when he was being put on a stretcher preparatory to being taken to a hospital on shore. Opening his eyes he felt that not only his left hand but also his chest and head were bandaged.

There was a stillness around him—no firing, no explosions, only the low rumble of the quietening sea.

The skipper, Pavel Sivenko, who had also been wounded and bandaged, bent over the machine-gunner and affectionately put a hand on his shoulder.

"Your job now is to recover quickly. Let's hope we'll meet again, but wherever we may find ourselves I'm sure we shall always remember this battle at sunrise."

Kuropyatnikov and the other wounded sailors were taken to a hospital in a launch. As the launch sped to the shore, they gazed at the big ship they had saved. She was rocking quietly on the waves.

A few days later it was announced that Grigory Kuropyatnikov had been decorated with the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. The SK-65, meanwhile, flew a Guards flag at its stern.

M. Zinger

TORPEDOES FIND THEIR MARK

Captain of the 2nd Rank Ivan Kolyshkin was a well-known figure in Podplava, base of the Northern Fleet. The submarine commander could be seen frequently on the wooden sidewalks of Podplava with a small suitcase and in battle dress, a sure sign that he was leaving on an assignment.

Every time he returned from sea, he made a bee-line for the baths on shore to take a hot shower. It was delightful to be back on land after a long cruise. You could let the fresh-water tap run as long as you liked. As yet a luxury such as a bathroom was not to be thought of in a submarine, where every inch of space was turned to account.

Admiral Makarov had been the one who said: "Despondent people are of no use for such an enterprising province as the Navy, especial-

ly in time of war." In Podplava, people knew Kolyshkin for a debonair, sociable and dashing officer.

As the commander of a small unit, he accompanied raw skippers on battle assignments to help them out of difficulties.

Kolyshkin loved books and always had them about him. One of the books he read when he was a student at the Frunze Naval Academy had a passage stating: "To become a good sailor, one must spend long periods at sea and in that manner accustom oneself to being between sky and water and to regarding the sea as one's home." That became a rule not only for Kolyshkin but also for the whole of the Northern Fleet.

Kolyshkin's battle formula was to attack and sink the enemy on sight without waiting for consultation. In this he was guided by Admiral Makarov's maxim: "If you meet an enemy who is weaker than you—attack! If the enemy is numerically your equal—attack! And if he is stronger than you are—attack!"

That was also how other Heroes of the Soviet Union—Gadzhiyev, Lunin, Starikov and Fisanovich among others—fought.

Submarine commander Captain of the 2nd Rank Gadzhiyev engaged a numerically

superior enemy in open battle, sinking a patrol ship and a "sea hunter" cutter, and seriously damaging another cutter.

Submarine commander Lunin single-handedly attacked a powerful squadron escorting the battleship *Tirpitz* in the Barents Sea and inflicted such damage on this, one of the Nazis' best ships, that she had to return to her base.

Feats like this built up the fighting traditions of the Northern Fleet's submarines. There was nothing of the dare-devil about them, for every submarine commander was fully aware that the war had to be ended as quickly as possible. Every torpedo that found its mark brought victory nearer. The sinking of a tanker paralysed an aircraft or tank division. The destruction of a transport meant the annihilation of two or even three thousand fully equipped officers and men. Often a transport took down with it a hundred medium tanks or a hundred fighter aircraft. Such was the effective help the submarines of the Northern Fleet were giving the Soviet Army.

Captain of the 2nd Rank Kolyshkin regarded his duties from that standpoint. First and foremost he strove to assist the Army in its bitter struggle against the Nazis, who had enslaved

and were drawing upon the resources of almost the whole of Western Europe. To do that he knew he had to be at sea more frequently, to feel himself at home in his ship.

Indeed, he went ashore as a visitor. People saw him only in a leather raglan and fore-and-aft cap and with the invariable suitcase in his hand. He returned from sea in one submarine only to transfer to another. His life was a continuous round of battles. He was not powerfully built but he had tremendous inner strength which made him such an energetic, keen and indefatigable sailor.

He had had a hard childhood. Born in the village of Krutets near Yaroslavl, he went to work at the age of 12. At 15, he was already a sailor on a barge plying the Volga.

Like his childhood playmates, he grew up on the banks of the Volga and learned to swim in any weather, hold his own against angry waves, skilfully manage a sailing boat and understand the great Russian river and read its depths and shallows like a book. He spent more time on the river than in his home.

Ivan Kolyshkin had set his heart on becoming a barge skipper before he was called up. He did become a barge skipper but only for two days, for in response to a Komsomol

appeal, he joined the Navy. At that time thousands of Komsomols enlisted in the Navy and many of them became Heroes of the Soviet Union and won fame for their ships and units, while many others sacrificed their young lives to win a better future for their country.

Kolyshkin had a prodigious memory. He had to read something only once to remember it for the rest of his life. For that reason sailors loved to have him spin yarns for them. In reserve he always had an inexhaustible store of witty words, expressions and sayings and he drew upon that store to buck his comrades up in the most dangerous moments of their life at sea. He loved to declaim poetry and could do so endlessly, but duty left very little time for leisure. He could take time off when they were deep below the surface of the sea. It was more peaceful there. But when the submarine was at periscope-depth, Kolyshkin was always silent and thoughtful, for all his attention would be taken up with the way the crew fulfilled their duty.

Wearing his cap (if the fore-and-aft cap was left on shore) with the peak at the back of his head, he would peer intently into the periscope, scanning the horizon, searching for a wisp of smoke in the air or on the sea. It

was something he burned to see, for it presaged a meeting with the enemy. The crew was quick to know if he saw anything, for then he would take a biscuit from the pocket of his tunic and begin to nibble at it. In a whisper, the man in the central post would pass on the word to the torpedo room that "things have reached the biscuit stage." That was the first sure indication that the enemy had been sighted and that shortly there would be a big *bairam*, as Kolyshkin's friend Gadzhiyev, an Azerbaijanian, called his attacks.

On board the submarine as an instructor, Kolyshkin took pains not to stifle the initiative of the young commander, making it seem that he, Kolyshkin, was in the submarine only as an observer. When there was a pressing need for it, all he would say was:

"In your place, skipper, I'd have done it differently...." The young skipper naturally heeded to the voice of the experienced submariner, for there was much that he could teach. Men like Starikov and Fisanovich had had him attached to them.

During one of his cruises, Kolyshkin sank four enemy ships. It was the submariner's greatest victory, but not a word about it could be reported by WT and nobody knew with

what result the submarine was returning to its base. Many officers and men were on the pier when the submarine entered the harbour. The flotilla commander went to meet the submarine and as his launch drew up alongside, he asked:

"What's the score?"

In reply, Kolyshkin ordered his gunners to fire four rounds. These thundered out in the Polar night, illuminating the high hills. That was one of the many times that the guns on Kolyshkin's submarines announced a victory and often when guns were fired in the harbour people hastened to find out if Kolyshkin had returned and if this was another victory salute.

To young commanders, the veteran submariner said:

"We're fighting a war. I could forgive you if you do not bring your vessels in beautifully so long as you fight beautifully. Weigh every situation carefully. Keep your head whatever the circumstance. Do not be hasty in your decisions."

If a commander was too passive he sought to infect him with aggressive energy; and if he was too aggressive, he kept him in check. He made a point of reminding a young com-

mander that he bore the responsibility for a large crew and a valuable vessel. "You're not a fighter pilot," he would say. "A pilot is alone in his machine. He risks his own neck and his machine. But you are a submariner and that binds you to a lot of things. To be a good submariner one must be proficient in mathematics and be as calculating, collected and confident as a mathematician."

There were cases of signalmen mistaking a sea-gull for an aircraft and causing submarines to submerge hastily. Kolyshkin never bridled up at these errors. On the contrary, he said:

"It is better to mistake a sea-gull for an aircraft ten times and have the submarine submerge instantly each time than to miss seeing an enemy ship or aircraft once."

During a cruise with Fisanovich, after the submarine had broken through into an enemy-held fiord, carried out its assignment and returned to the open sea, Kolyshkin ordered vodka to be issued to each member of the crew. Toasting the Communist Party, the inspirer of all of the Soviet Union's achievements, he said:

"Comrades, we broke through into a fiord held by the enemy, attacked and sank one of

his ships and returned to the open sea. At this moment, somewhere on shore, in the hills or in a field where the situation is critical a commissar is suddenly rising to his full height and crying: 'Communists, forward!' As one man, the Communists follow him, drawing all the other troops after them, and charge the enemy. We, submariners, are fighting a different kind of war. We go into battle in a close metal box. We seek out the enemy and sink him. In a submarine you can't say. 'Communists forward!' But when I am in the central post or in the conning-tower, I know that beside me I have the commander, a young Soviet officer, a Communist, a true son of the Party. I know that the sound-detector operator is a Communist, a former schoolteacher at a collective farm. He picks out the noises in the sea, follows them like a sentry, like a scout. I know that our engineer who is also a Communist, will not let us down either. I rely on the hold petty officer, whom I know as a good Communist, and on the torpedo room petty officer. When I see a target, when the signal for attack is given, I know everything in the submarine is prepared for action. As the submarine goes into battle, the Communists and the entire crew go with it. I am confident that every

member of the crew tries to carry out his duties to the best of his ability. The Communists are setting an example on land and at sea. Communists, forward!"

No wonder Kolyshkin was elected a member of the Party Commission of the Fleet. No wonder people turned to him when their hearts were heavy and they needed someone in whom to confide their innermost thoughts.

He was an early riser and was always shaved and had his uniform freshly pressed before the flag was hoisted. The sailor's habit of always looking spick and span became as a second nature with him. The war did not in the least affect his routine on land or at sea. He became accustomed to a strict time-table from the moment he joined the Navy and could not stand slovenliness. He trained his men in all weather, saying: "You can't order the weather to be fine and visibility to be good." At sea, the submariner has to put up with storms, fogs and all the other "attractions" of a long cruise.

* * *

After sinking an enemy ship in the Barents Sea, the submarine with Kolyshkin on board turned towards its base to announce the victory with a salvo. Kolyshkin was pleased at

having helped the commander, Fyodor Vidyayev, a young Communist, to score this victory. Everything was running smoothly, when unexpectedly the submarine found itself in an uncharted mine-field. A powerful explosion smashed the screw. The submarine could not move, went out of control. That happened near the shore within range of enemy guns. A snow-storm was all that prevented the submarine from being shelled out of the water. But the hope to save the vessel and the crew was not abandoned. The gunners were at their posts.

The submarine had to be taken farther away from the shore, for the snow-storm could not be expected to last for ever. It was decided to make a sail. The hoods were taken off the guns and made into a sail. That was the first sail in the history of submarines. A fair wind slowly bore the submarine away from the shore. When the snow-storm began to abate, it was about ten miles from the shore. An enemy ship appeared on the horizon and an aircraft began to signal with flares.

It was a race against time. A submarine skippered by Captain of the 2nd Rank Viktor Kotelnikov appeared on the scene and rescued

the crew of the crippled vessel, taking them back to their base.

During his long years of service in the Navy, Ivan Kolyshkin learned all the naval trades and never stopped perfecting his knowledge. Lenin's words about the importance of learning, uttered at the Third Congress of the Komsomol, sank deep into Kolyshkin's mind when he first left his village to join the Navy.

Many sailors owe their knowledge and the shaping of their characters and will-power to him.

To say that one had sailed with Kolyshkin meant that one had gone through a kind of university course in submarine warfare. Kolyshkin's knack of teaching people helped him to pass his experience and knowledge on to his subordinates.

In the first months of the war, the Nazis tried not to trouble their Navy with convoy duty. Transports sailed without escorts. But the torpedo blows dealt by the Northern Fleet and by aircraft compelled the enemy to change his tactics. The huge, and ever-growing losses in supplies and troops transported by sea made him increase the number of patrol boats, join his transports into caravans and lay more and more mine-fields. All that hampered

the activity of the Northern Fleet but could not stop it.

A total of sixteen enemy vessels were sunk with Kolyshkin's direct participation. In addition to other decorations, he was awarded five Orders of the Red Banner. He began as a sailor and ended with the rank of Rear Admiral and Commander of a Flotilla.

He served in the submarine fleet for fourteen years. He joined the Northern Fleet, which was based in the distant Arctic waters, when submarines were first introduced there, and worked on the rugged shore and in the stormy seas of the North. He was the first submariner to win the title of Hero of the Soviet Union during the war.

M. Velichko

THE INVISIBLE TORPEDO-BOAT

Nobody at the base had ever seen the torpedo-boat commanded by Alexander Shabalin return after an operation with any signs of damage. The fact of the matter was that before the vessel returned to its base, the close-knit, well-trained crew always managed to repair any damage to the well-scrubbed deck by a shell or a burst from a machine-gun. The work was done so skilfully that even an experienced eye found it difficult to discover traces of the repairs. Another thing that struck people was that the TK-12 invariably carried out its tasks. It sank three enemy ships at a time when none of the other torpedo-boats had a major victory to its credit.

"Shabalin was born under a lucky star," said the men of the other torpedo-boats with both admiration and envy in their voices. In-

deed, a perfunctory examination of the battles in which Shabalin's vessel participated could give the impression that the young skipper was having a "devil's run of luck." In these operations he torpedoed enemy ships without meeting any opposition. Shabalin was "lucky" in the landing operations as well. When other torpedo-boats landed scouts in the enemy rear they were shelled by shore batteries or attacked by aircraft. Shabalin's TK-12, meanwhile, penetrated into enemy fiords, landed scouts deep in his rear, lay at anchor for long periods near the enemy coast waiting until the scouts finished their task, and furrowed the expanses of the Barents Sea without once being noticed by the enemy. It seemed as though the young skipper had a cloak of invisibility.

...On December 22, 1943, Soviet air scouts spotted a large enemy convoy: three transports, a destroyer, four mine-sweepers, six patrol boats and ten submarine chasers. Taught a lesson by the daring attacks of the Soviet ships, the Nazis kept increasing the number of vessels escorting their transports. But this time they were obviously transporting something of particular importance, for there were seven fighting vessels to each transport.

The sea was restless. A sharp wind was churning up huge waves. It looked as though there could be no question of torpedo-boats putting out in such weather. But long all-weather training had given Soviet sailors the necessary experience, so much so that they regarded a turbulent sea as an ally in the war. It was therefore decided to deal the convoy a mass blow regardless of the storm.

All the torpedo-boats of the squadron except Alexander Shabalin's TK-12 headed for the open sea to intercept the convoy. The TK-12 was at that moment on a different task. When it returned to its base, its sister ships were already gone. Learning that there was a big operation on foot, Shabalin telephoned headquarters and requested permission to refuel and join the squadron.

"Isn't it rather late, Comrade Shabalin?"

"I don't think so."

"But your crew is tired and needs a rest."

"A good attack is a rest," Shabalin urged.

Half an hour later, the TK-12 left the base and disappeared into the darkness.

The sea fumed and boiled. As it struggled to the top of giant foam-covered waves, the torpedo-boat trembled as in a fever. Standing at the helm with his feet wide apart, Alexander

Shabalin seemed to be just touching it with his big fur gloves. Though outwardly calm, he was worried that by the time he reached the scene of action the battle may be over. He glanced about him: the men, dressed in rubber boots, water-proof cloaks and leather helmets, were at their stations. He knew each of them intimately as one knows one's relatives—their habits, moods and qualities as seamen. In the long periods of training and in battle, the young skipper achieved such coordination in his ship that his subordinates understood every movement he made and carried out his orders with such alacrity that it seemed he was doing everything with his own hands.

The battle had already started when the TK-12 reached the scene of action. Flares hung in the sky like huge lanterns. Searchlights were cleaving the darkness and sweeping the angry sea in all directions. Machine-gun bullets were tracing multi-coloured patterns in the air.

Shabalin stopped his cutter out of range of the searchlights. The boatswain bent to the skipper and shouted above the roar of the sea:

"We've stepped right into the thick of things. We'll have a busy time of it."

The running naval battle had reached its highest pitch: the enemy ships were turning in all directions and spraying the sea with gun and machine-gun fire; the torpedo-boats commanded by Shabalin's friends had discharged their torpedoes and were already retiring.

To rush into the fight at this moment would mean drawing the full force of the enemy fire. Turning his vessel sharply, Shabalin headed it away from the enemy, into the darkness of the Polar night.

Far behind him, the torpedoes discharged by his friends were exploding, throwing orange pillars of flame into the sky. The torpedo gunner was bewildered by this unexpected turn and cried out:

"But, Comrade Commander, our chaps are beating the snakes! Beating them!"

Never before had the TK-12 stood in for the base in the face of the enemy without discharging all its torpedoes, but now the torpedo-boat was avoiding the enemy in search of whom it sometimes spent days scouring the sea.

...The torpedo-boat squadron returned to the base. The skippers made their reports. But the skipper of the TK-12 was not among them. An hour, then two hours went by, but still

nothing was heard from him. Headquarters were worried.

...Reducing speed in order to leave as small a stern wave as possible, Shabalin waited for the firing to cease and the convoy to line up and resume its course.

The searchlights went out, the convoy, now considerably smaller, got into line and moved past as though they were target boards at gunnery practice.

"We're moving in to attack," Shabalin said curtly to the boatswain and without increasing speed directed the torpedo-boat at the barely visible silhouette of the destroyer.

The boatswain, the torpedo gunner and the rest of the crew, who had been standing at their action stations, now understood that their skipper was planning to hit the Nazis without them ever seeing the TK-12. Many of them recalled a similar stormy night on November 7, 1941, when after a long search the torpedo-boat suddenly sighted and attacked a huge enemy transport, sending a torpedo into its side and vanishing. Later, prisoners of war related that the transport had been taking two thousand picked troops to the northern flank of the front. The Tyrolese Chasseurs went down to their watery grave with-

out firing a single shot. Now, too, after the confusion that had reigned, the Nazis were not expecting to be attacked. The darkened outlines of the ships, rolling on the heavy sea, were moving like so many targets.

Tightening his fingers round the helm, Shabalin steered his fast torpedo-boat, which was tiny compared with even the smallest of the ships of the convoy, head on at the destroyer. As it was getting within torpedo range, the thought flashed through Shabalin's mind that his vessel might be noticed, but in the next instant his attention was fixed on the "torpedo triangle," the mathematical calculation of the attack.

The destroyer was already within range, but Shabalin held his fire, seeking to get closer in order to make sure of hitting the enemy.

"Time," he whispered and pulled back the release. The torpedo slipped into the sea.

A slight turn of the helm took the torpedo-boat a little to the right, at a patrol boat that was following in the wake of the destroyer. Another pull at the release brought another sigh from the torpedo tube. Shabalin sharply put the helm over and simultaneously turned the handle of the engine-room telegraph to

"Full ahead." The cutter shot forward, leaving the water churning in its wake.

"One, two, three ..." Shabalin counted to himself. The seconds went by slowly. The engines roared at full speed, while the convoy was fast disappearing in the darkness behind the torpedo-boat. Nerves were strained to the utmost: everybody waited anxiously, speculating whether the torpedoes had found their mark. Two consecutive explosions settled all doubts.

"Bull's eye!" the boatswain shouted with all his might.

"A hit!" shouted the torpedo gunner, although nobody heard his exultant cry.

The glow of the explosions lighted up the sky over the convoy. Flares again shot up into the air, desultory firing broke out, and depth charges exploded. Searchlights again swept the sea. But in vain did the enemy seek the cause of the destruction of two warships: the "invisible" torpedo-boat, fighting six-point storm waves, was already heading for home.

"We gave them hell, right enough, Comrade Commander," the boatswain shouted into Shabalin's ear.

"Looks like it," Shabalin replied, wiping the salt spray off his face.

The sea raged.

The crew had to display all their training, staunchness and skill to take their vessel safely back to the base through the storm.

Again in the torpedo-boat squadron could be heard the words:

"Shabalin was born under a lucky star!"

With his unusually shy smile, Shabalin told his comrades-in-arms:

"When we arrived there was such a commotion that I decided to stay out of it for a while and bide my time. The moment after they recovered from their confusion was too good to miss."

It was this very ability of his to bide his time, to occupy an advantageous position depending on the situation, to pounce upon the enemy at full speed or to advance quietly, to discharge a torpedo in a way in which the enemy would learn of the attack only after the explosion added to Shabalin's seamanship, natural sharpness, bravery and daring that comprised what is called the talent of a naval officer and made the TK-12 invulnerable as though its commander indeed possessed a cloak of invisibility.

"I have never attacked in the strictly regulation way," Shabalin said. "I always acted as I thought the situation required."

In World War II, the torpedo-boat skippered by Alexander Shabalin sank seven enemy ships. His feats won him the Order of Lenin and two Orders of the Red Banner. After the operation of December 22, 1943, he was decorated with the Gold Star and title of Hero of the Soviet Union. He received his second Gold Star for the break-through to Petsamo when the Soviet Army started another major offensive.

... The way to the port of Liinahamari (the name borne by the ancient Russian town of Pechenga prior to its liberation) was the most difficult and dangerous sector of the Northern theatre. The Nazis spent three years fortifying the port and its approaches. The entire coast was dotted with weapon emplacements—from machine-gun pillboxes to large-calibre shore batteries. A force that took the risk of reaching Liinahamari had to pass a 15-mile stretch that was covered by enemy fire and then break through past the batteries guarding the entrance into the first bend of Petsamo Bay. That bend, three miles long and six or eight cable-lengths wide, was a real "death

corridor." From both banks the Nazis could block the passage with fire from virtually all directions. Beyond the "death corridor," as though under seven seals, was the dish-like Devkina Creek with an ancient Russian township on its bank. That was the port of Liinahamari.

In October 1944, during the Soviet Army's offensive, it was decided to have a naval landing party seize the port of Liinahamari in order to prevent the port's destruction and to cut off the retreat of the Alpine Chasseurs entrenched in the granite of the Musta-Tunturi Heights.

The problem was to choose the right man to lead the ships carrying the landing party through the "death corridor." This man had to have nerves of steel. He had to be someone who could unflinchingly face the full force of the enemy's guns besides knowing all the bends and prominences and every landmark in the bay.

The names of many officers were considered and the choice finally fell on Shabalin.

In the small hours of October 13, 1944, the torpedo-boats with the landing party on board set out for Liinahamari. Shabalin led the way. Passing Rybachi Peninsula, he saw flashes

on the summits of sombre Musta-Tunturi. There marines were storming the positions of the Alpine Chasseurs. In the distance, around Petsamo, there was the glow of fires. Searchlights cut through the gloom of the autumn night at the entrance of the bay and flares lit up the sky.

"They're feeling nervous," Shabalin thought and glanced round at the torpedo-boats stretched out in a long line and seeming to repeat every movement the leader made.

The column was spotted by the enemy just as it was turning into the entrance. From the shore searchlights slashed the darkness, rockets filled the sky and the air became thick with shells and bullets. But at the helm of the leading cutter stood a Communist, whose composure and self-control seemed to be taming the storm of fire.

Shabalin confidently led the way. He had studied the enemy's defences in detail and now as he picked out the least dangerous road he put his knowledge to the test. Almost zigzagging, he turned his boat now to the bank from where the enemy fire was the heaviest, taking advantage of the cover of rocks, then suddenly crossing to the opposite shore. The farther Shabalin penetrated into the

bay, the more furious the firing behind him became.

Booms loomed up before him in the harbour. Avoiding this danger, he found himself in front of the pier. What if it was mined? His mind worked feverishly. He decided not to go alongside the pier.

The Nazis were firing from the moorages, from every crevice, every house. Machine-gun bullets came thick and fast. The air was filled with their whistling and with the crash of explosions. But the torpedo-boat had already touched the moorage with its bow and men of the landing party were jumping off and running up the bank.

The bay resembled a cauldron with boiling water. The torpedo-boats were throwing up a smoke-screen. It seemed as though a fantastic carnival was being held. Shabalin manoeuvred in this seething cauldron, showing the other boats where to land their troops. On the next day, he repeated the operation, transporting reinforcements from one bank of the bay to the other.

The break-through was accomplished brilliantly. Not a single Soviet torpedo-boat was lost.

The ancient Russian town of Pechenga became Soviet.

Replying to the congratulations of his friends, Shabalin made a very short speech. He said:

"It is not easy for torpedo-boats to fight a war in our Northern waters. But if you love your country, the sea and the Navy, and if hatred for the enemy burns in your breast, you will always carry the day."

Document generated by Anna’s Archive around 2023-2024 as part of the DuXiu collection (https://annas-blog.org/duxiu-exclusive.html).

Images have been losslessly embedded. Information about the original file can be found in PDF attachments. Some stats (more in the PDF attachments):

{
  "filename": "NDAyNzIwNTVfTUVOIE9GIFRIRSBTRUFfcDk4LnppcA==",
  "filename_decoded": "40272055_MEN OF THE SEA_p98.zip",
  "filesize": 4003547,
  "md5": "94252c1b519bdbd4148200b0045c4bfa",
  "header_md5": "4a1ebf1a5dd6d9dcd145ccc2b7d3d5ea",
  "sha1": "b6aa3d0aa2fbf3ac821fd05e73ab3ef7b0e83205",
  "sha256": "a2f48c8c79b02f740803b5c5f16c1ad9ced4ef4c02557b5f725e4c7c552c4eab",
  "crc32": 425256099,
  "zip_password": "6622Ee",
  "uncompressed_size": 3981757,
  "pdg_dir_name": "40272055_MEN OF THE SEA_p98",
  "pdg_main_pages_found": 98,
  "pdg_main_pages_max": 98,
  "total_pages": 100,
  "total_pixels": 219793409,
  "pdf_generation_missing_pages": false
}